

**Architectural and historical report for Buchlyvie, 8 Highbury
Road, Portion 617 of 611 of Albinia 957 Hillcrest**



Main Elevation from garden (Photo: Author 2011)

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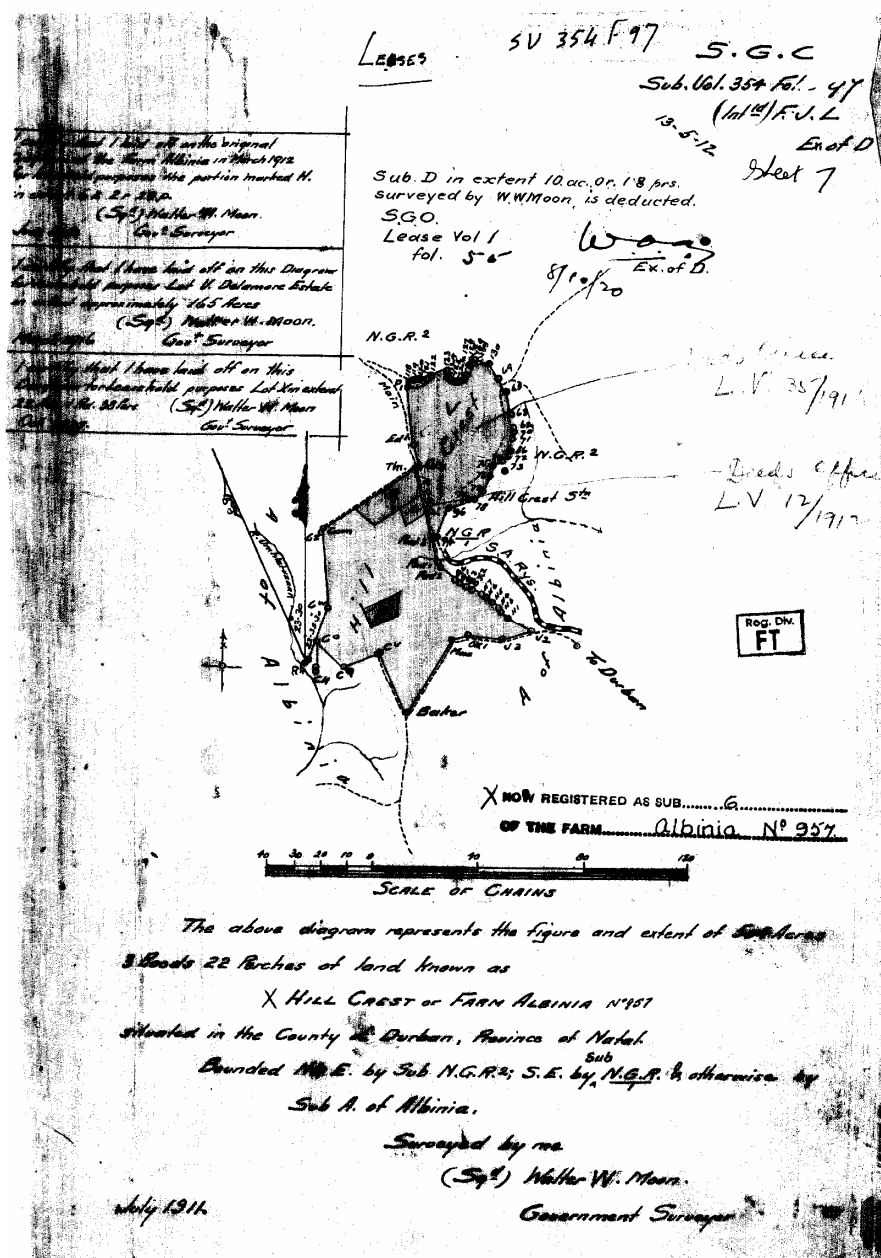


Fig 1: Survey Diagram for Subdivision 6, dated 1911.

1. Introduction

Debbie Whelan of Archaic Consulting was requested by Ms Sally Fletcher of Lester Hall, Swan and Fletcher, to carry out an historical and architectural report assessing the heritage value of the house previously known as Buchlyvie, situated at 8 Highbury Road, Hillcrest.

The purpose of the report is to inform purchasers of the property of the likelihood of future alteration or demolition, given its blanket protection in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act no 4 of 2008.

2. Methodology

A site inspection was carried out on 12th October 2011, and the building photographed. Supplementary material regarding the history of the house was gleaned from a variety of sources, namely past owners and members of the Highway Heritage Society. In addition, one of the very few published works on the history of the Hillcrest area, *Pioneers Progress*, was consulted. The Deeds Office was visited and the Land Registers for Albinia 957 consulted, as well as the Natal Almanacs and the Braby's Directories from 1907-1974. Archival searches of both the Pietermaritzburg and the Durban Archives Repositories revealed scant information.

The information given to Archaic Consulting was that the house was constructed in 1907. This appeared contradictory, given the Union Period style of architecture which puts it at least a decade later. There is little diagnostic material within the house to date its components, and there have been subsequent alterations. Assessment of the building is carried out using its context, history and social and architectural value, and the recommendations in this report are constructed using the author's experience in the heritage sector. It must also be strongly pointed out that regardless of the recommendations of this report, any application to Amafa is submitted to a full committee who assess and adjudicate its merits. In addition, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Heritage Act stipulates a public participation process be carried out in the event of demolition applications.

3. History of site

The site is located on the Subdivision Hillcrest, of the farm Albinia granted to William Gillitt in 1869. Subdivision Hillcrest, also known as Subdivision 6, was surveyed in 1911 (See fig 1) before being registered in the names of Edward, Albert and Clifton Gillitt in 1912. However, it is recorded that this subdivision was leased in its entirety to EL Acutt by the Gillitts family in 1895, for a 50 year period. Finding that he had more land than he needed, Acutt created sub-leases. These he let to Durban residents who, desirous of escaping the heat of Durban on occasion, constructed modest holiday homes on these plots. Most buildings were wood and iron, or of similar ilk, since few people were wont to spend vast resources on leasehold land. A previous owner, Mr Winterton, notes that the original house formed a mere portion of the existing one, and that later extensions most likely in the 1920s, created the footprint visible today.

Since this was leased land, it is difficult to establish the residents from first alienation, nor the exact date of the building of the house. Tenants are known to have been a Mr. Butcher, who was possibly the builder of the original house (O'Keefe 1988:81), and Major Welby, resident in 1924 according to the Natal Almanac, who grew carnations.

The Land Register for the site records that a 5 acres portion, Lot 53, was sold to Walter S Clarke in 1927. This is most likely the date for the substantial additions to the house, and this would fit in with the architectural idiom. Walter S Clarke, or Stanley Clarke as he was better known, is described as an Estate Agent in the 1931 Natal Almanac (Brabys), but, given the infancy of Hillcrest as a settlement, there is not much more information. The property remained in the Clarke family until 1967 when it was sold to Chester Eastwood Franklin. The 1974 Braby's Directory shows the residence as being named Buchlyvie. Whether this was a nomenclature adopted by Franklin or an enduring name for the house, it is not known. The Franklins sold the property to the Winterton family, who lived there for some three decades.

4. Assessment of building



Fig 2: Position of the house relative to Highbury Road (Photo: Author 2011)



Fig 3: 1937 aerial photograph showing the position of the house and the relatively underdeveloped grounds

Buchlyvie House is a substantial east facing dwelling constructed in the Union Period Cape Dutch Revival style, under a Marseille tiled roof. It has a central gable with flanking chimneys, and a wide front stoep which has been partially enclosed to form a bar, simultaneously upsetting the symmetry of the façade. The windows and external doors and French Doors are teak cottage pane, with original crafted brass fittings. The oeuvre continues internally with suspended Oregon floors, panelled walls and exposed ceiling beams. Two parallel wings continue west, with an 'M' Shaped roof profile. Internally this is read as a single double loaded corridor, with spacious rooms, each with new en-suite bathrooms, off to either side, and parts of this formed the original core of the building. At the rear, a large and possibly inappropriate kitchen space of recent renovation terminates the building. The other rooms of the house are well proportioned and spacious, to the point of baronial. The house is set in spacious yet manageable grounds, with a well established garden with some unusual specimens. The neighbours are close, yet largely invisible. These houses are situated on plots created by subdivision from the original Lot 53.

Outside, there is a garage and cottage of recent construction. These have little architectural or merit and can be demolished without a permit from Amafa.



Fig 4: Front Elevation of house (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 5: North east corner in relation to garden and boundary (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 6: North east corner looking at house (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 7: South east corner of house. Note side gable housing reception room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 8: French Doors to southern elevation (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 9: Rear elevation- kitchen entrance (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 10: north western corner (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 11: Internal view of much altered open plan kitchen (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 12: Kitchen view into scullery (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 13: Old door leading from kitchen (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 14: View down hall to main reception rooms (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 15: Room and en-suite (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 16: Room and en-suite (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 17: Room and en-suite (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 18: Reception Room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 19: Room and en-suite (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 20: Reception room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 21: Reception room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 22: Reception room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 23: Enclosed front veranda (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 24: Vestibule (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 25: Vestibule coat and stand (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 26: Front veranda (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 27: Teak French Doors with brass fittings (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 28: View from panelled hallway into kitchen space (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 29: Ceiling of Reception room (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 30: View to garden in east (Photo: Author 2011).



Fig 31: Garage (Photo: Author 2011).

5. Recommendations

Summary of assessment

What was once known as Buchlyvie House situated at 8 Highbury Road, is an elegant and capacious dwelling which reflects a past landscape in a different era. Much of its original grounds were carved up, leaving the house still located in its established and interesting garden.

There is no streetscape to speak of, since the house is set well back into the garden. All the buildings which surround it are of very recent and almost contemporaneous construction, and form a neighbourhood that has lost the complexity of urban spaces that have been established over time.

This house, in its present form, has little or no connection with specific social histories, and, indeed, appears little known in historical and architectural circles. There is no evidence to connect it with technical or scientific processes, nor, apart from Major Welby who grew carnations, much in the way of historical importance in the settling of the village.

Whilst arguments can be made for the lack of streetscape, lack of context, and lack of association with social or historic personages, technical or scientific innovation, it is strongly suspected that application to alter or demolish is not likely to find favour with the Amafa Built Environment Committee. ***Its age and architectural merit constitutes it as a heritage resource in terms of the Provincial Heritage Act.***

It is known that this was one of the first houses in Hillcrest, possibly built by Mr. Butcher. In a landscape that has experienced rapid conurbation, it is a remnant of the origins of Hillcrest. The house itself has architectural merit in its extant envelope. The building is substantial and in reasonable condition, although some unfortunate alterations have been made which have altered the external symmetry and the integrity of the interior. It is a good example of a Union Period domestic dwelling, and is reflective of an important period in South Africa's architectural and political history.

The most appropriate use for the building is as a dwelling or B&B, or, given its setting and position, corporate headquarters or offices.

Option: Partial or major alteration/ addition.

The author is of the personal opinion that any further alterations, internal or external, to the building would be detrimental to its envelope which is relatively uniform and contiguous. However, it must be noted that any future intended alterations must be carried out by an Amafa approved Heritage Architect and that it has to comply with the principles laid down in the Burra Charter. Any new work must be modest: in contemporary materials but respecting the proportions and scale of the original building. Any alteration to the outbuildings can be made without recourse to Amafa.

Option: Full or partial demolition.

The author is of the opinion that any application for full or partial demolition would most likely not pass the Amafa Committee adjudication. Demolition of the outbuildings can be carried out without recourse to Amafa.

6. References

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Braby's Directory 1974

People Consulted:

Mrs Lindsey Napier
Mr Robin Lamplough (ex Highway Heritage Society)
Mr Winterton (previous owner)